

Shrewsbury Public Schools
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545

Anthony J. Bent
Superintendent

April 27, 2004

To: The Shrewsbury Town Meeting

From: The Shrewsbury School Committee
 Anthony J. Bent, Superintendent

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION: THIS YEAR

The school district continues to distinguish itself in many ways. MCAS, perhaps the highest profile measure, ranks Shrewsbury in the top 10-15% of school districts every year. The Boston Globe, in the fall of this academic year, placed Shrewsbury 30th among the 210 school districts on MCAS performance. Additionally, our Scholastic Aptitude Tests, both Verbal (523) and Mathematics (531), were above state averages and higher than last year. Finally, our high school students took 223 Advanced Placement examinations, the highest number in the school's history, and 86% received a qualifying score (the second highest qualifying rate in over ten years).

MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE: NEXT YEAR

The initial presentation of the FY05 budget rested upon three basic objectives: opening a new school; responding to enrollment increases; and upholding current standards.

Opening a New School

It is our hope that the Oak Middle School will be ready for students in August. The school will allow the school district to reconfigure to a model that features the Parker Road Preschool, the Beal Early Childhood Center (K-1), four elementary schools (grades 1-4), the Sherwood Middle School (5-6), the Oak Middle School (7-8), and Shrewsbury High School (9-12). Much of the additional cost of opening the new school is related to enrollment growth. The following categories highlight the resources needed:

• Principal and assistants	\$254,860
• Curriculum support staff	\$181,241
• 4 teachers in core subjects	\$179,464
• 7 teachers in specialty areas (e.g., art, music, etc.)	\$314,062
• Nurse, secretary, media aide, psychologist, counselor	\$190,987
• Textbooks and other instructional materials	<u>\$76,584</u>
	\$1,197,198

The Shrewsbury Public Schools, in partnership with the community, will provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21st century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition, and the desire to continue to learn throughout life.

Responding to Enrollment Increases

According to the town manager's recent enrollment data, the school population has grown by 2,221 since 1991. That kind of growth explains our seemingly endless efforts to maintain the quality of our programs under constantly changing circumstances. Our preK-12 enrollment next year will likely be in excess of 5,800 students. The recommendations below (exclusive of Oak Middle) are important additions based upon enrollment needs and made possible as a result of the opening of a ninth school in Shrewsbury.

- 17.8 teachers (5 preK/elementary, 11.2 MS/HS, 1.6 specialists) \$798,615
- Materials for new classrooms \$74,626
- 4 additional buses \$156,413

Upholding Current Standards

The biggest portion of the budget in any given year relates to bringing the program forward from one fiscal year to the next and making modest improvements. Unfortunately, the reductions made to the original budget request (\$1.6 million) have eliminated nearly all of the restorations of the cuts from previous years (e.g., kindergarten art, 10 instructional aides, school-based funds for books and materials, late bus service, etc.) and nearly all of the new initiatives (e.g., social studies texts for grades 4,5, and 8, interscholastic sports at the middle school, etc.).

SUMMARY

As of this writing, the FY05 request voted by the school committee stands at \$37,061,996, an increase of 9.1% over FY04. As has been stated on a variety of occasions, the school committee is reluctant to make further cuts in the budget request. The new school and the increase in enrollment simply require resources if this community is to retain the high quality program that it has had over the years.

We know that there have been calls for fees to be implemented as a way to reduce the budget and preserve programs and staff. We also know that Shrewsbury, both on the school and municipal side of government, has a long tradition of not charging fees to its residents. The school committee is reluctant to charge families for what are essential components of the school program, but is prepared to enter that arena if such is the desire of the community.

After all is said and done, the rationale for the requested resources is on solid ground: Shrewsbury is a district that performs well above the state average with well below the state average in funding.